

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 ACDA-07 /073 W

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R 280910Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6496

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 2944

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, RP, LY, XF

SUBJECT: MARCOS REJECTS MNLF OBJECTION TO PLEBISCITE

REF: MANILA 2453

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT MARCOS HAS REJECTED MNLF OBJECTION TO MINDANAO PELBISCITE, IMPLYING THAT IT WILL TAKE PLACE AS SCHEDULED. HE CLAIMED LIBYANS AGREED TO PLEBISCITE DURING PHONE CONVERSATION OF WHICH GOP HAS TRANSCRIPT. HE COUPLED THIS WITH REASSURANCES TO NERVOUS CHRISTIANS THAT PROPOSED AUTONOMOUS REGION WILL IN FACT CONVEY LITTLE REAL AUTONOMY AND THAT IT WILL NOT BE FOR MUSLIMS ONLY. TAKEN AT FACE VALUE, MARCOS' REAFFIRMATION OF PLEBISCITE SUGGESTS THAT TRIPOLI NEGOTIATIONS (WHICH ACCORDING AP RESUMED ON SUNDAY) ARE HEADED FOR DRAMATIC BREAKDOWN.

HOWEVER, IT IS STILL POSSIBLE THAT LIBYANS AND GOP HAVE

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ALREADY REACHED BEHIND-SCENES AGREEMENT AND WE ARE WITNESSING ELABORATE ACT. AS UNCERTAINTY CONTINUES, NERVOUS APPREHENSION AMONG CHRISTIANS AND MILITARY REMAINS HIGH. END SUMMARY.

1. IN TELEVISED SPEECH BEFORE ROTARIANS FEBRUARY 26

PRESIDENT MARCOS REJECTED MNLF DEMAND THAT HE PROCLAIM

MINDANAO AUTONOMY BY DECREE, WITHOUT PLEBISCITE SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 17. HE DESCRIBED PLEBISCITE AS "ACT OF SOVEREIGNTY" IN WHICH NO OUTSIDERS COULD INTERVENT. "I MAY HAVE WON ALL THE PLEBISCITES AND ALL THE REFERENDA IN THE PAST, BUT THIS IS ONE PLEBISCITE (SIC) WHERE WE WILL LOSE IF WE INSIST ON SUCH ACTION," MARCOS SAID.

2. PRESIDENT SAID THAT PLEBISCITE ISSUE WAS DISCUSSED IN TELEPHONE CONVERSATION AMONG HIMSELF, QADHAFI AND AL TREKI DURING FIRST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS. MARCOS CLAIMED HE HAD SAID THAT HE DID NOT CARE HOW MANY PROVINCES WERE PROPOSED FOR THE AUTONOMOUS REGION AS LONG AS PHILIPPINE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES WERE FOLLOWED. MARCOS SAID HE THEN EXPLAINED THAT THIS MEANT HOLDING A PLEBISCITE, AND THAT BOTH AL TREKI AND QADHAFI INDICATED AGREEMENT. MARCOS SAID GOP HAS "TRANSCRIPT" PROVING THAT CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE.

3. PRESIDENT THEN DESCRIBED AUTONOMOUS REGION IN TERMS DESIGNED TO REASSURE CHRISTIANS THAT IT WILL IN FACT BE ANYTHING BUT AUTONOMOUS. HE SAID NEW 27-MAN ELECTED REGIONAL ASSEMBLY (SANGGUNIAN PAMPANGA) WOULD SUPPLEMENT BUT NOT REPLACE EXISTING PROVINCIAL CITY AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT; THAT REGION WOULD NOT BE "MUSLIM" SINCE SAME FORMULA WILL BE APPLIED TO OTHER REGIONS; THAT NATIONAL GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO CONTROL NATURAL RESOURCES; AND THAT "AUTONOMOUS ARMED FORCES" MERELY MEANT THAT QUALIFIED MNLF VETERANS MIGHT BE ABLE TO JOIN AFP.

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4. FOLLOWING DAY COMELEC CHAIRMAN PEREZ IN WIDELY REPORTED SPEECH URGED PRESIDENT TO MAKE "FULL AND COMPLETE DISCLOSURE" OF TRIPOLI NEGOTIATIONS. HE SAID THIS REQUIRED TO ENABLE VOTERS TO MAKE CORRECT CHOICES IN PLEBISCITE.

5. IN MEANTIME AP REPORT FROM TRIPOLI STATED THAT NEGOTIATIONS RESUMED SUNDAY (FEBRUARY 27) AND THAT RECENT HIATUS HAS BEEN DUE TO ABSENCE OF AL TREKI ON OTHER BUSINESS. ACCORDING AP, SUNDAY SESSION BEING CHAIRED BY LIBYAN ASSISTANT UNDERSEC FOR TECHNICAL AFFAIRS ATRASH.

6. COMMENT: PRESIDENT'S SPEECH, RAMBLING AND DEFENSIVE IN TONE, WAS FIRST PUBLIC ADMISSION THAT MNLF IS OPPOSED TO PLEBISCITE. MARCOS DID NOT INDICATE WHETHER OTHER PARTIES TO CONFERENCE (ISLAMIC CONFERENCE REPS AND LIBYANS) SHARE MNLF RESERVATIONS, ALTHOUGH WE UNDERSTAND THIS TO BE THE CASE. IF MISUARI MEANS WHAT HE SAYS AND HAS LIBYANS' BACKING, MARCOS' INSISTENCE ON PLEBISCITE WOULD SUGGEST THAT CONFERENCE IS HEADING FOR DRAMATIC

BREAKDOWN. HOWEVER WE WOULD NOT RULE OUT POSSIBILITY
THAT LIBYANS AND GOP HAVE ALREADY REACHED AGREEMENT ON
MINIMAL SETTLEMENT, THE EXACT PATTERN OF WHICH MAY NOT
EMERGE UNTIL FURTHER FIRST-PERSON DIPLOMACY BY MRS.
MARCOS AND/OR QADHAFI. IN MEANTIME PROLONGED UNCERTAINTY
IS GENERATING RUMORS AMONG UNHAPPY CHRISTIANS AND
NERVOUS MILITARY, AS INDICATED BY GOP'S CONTINUING
ATTEMPTS AT REASSURANCE.
SULLIVAN

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